

been endorsed by International Association of Chief of Police, the National Sheriffs' Association, the National District Attorneys Association, as well as 31 state Attorneys General.

I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this important legislation. In doing so we are sending a clear message that hate crimes have no place in America.

Mr. HOLT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of the Local Law Enforcement Hate Crime Prevention Act, H.R. 1592. This legislation seeks to address the pernicious effects that hate crimes have on our society.

Bigotry, bias, and ignorance have existed since the dawn of time. Yet, in a country founded on the principles of freedom, equality and liberty for all, we must do all we can to stop individuals from committing crimes based solely on prejudice.

According to the FBI's Uniform Crime Report, there were 7,163 hate crimes committed in 2005 and we can be sure that number is low for crimes that are underreported. Hate crimes are very real. And each hate crime spreads fear and violence among an entire community. It's long past time for Congress to pass this important legislation to help prosecute those who would commit these heinous acts.

To paraphrase Martin Luther King, the laws we pass may not change the heart; but they can restrain the heartless.

As an original cosponsor of this legislation, I believe it is the fundamental role of government to protect its citizens. Therefore, it is necessary and proper for the federal government to work in conjunction with local law enforcement officials to robustly prosecute crimes motivated by bigotry.

The Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act expands our Nation's existing hate crimes laws to ensure that certain violent crimes committed against an individual because of race, religion, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability are prosecuted. As this bill states, bias and bigotry related crime "savages the community sharing the traits that caused the victim to be selected" for the crime. Additionally, this legislation expands the hate crime statute by dropping the requirement that the victim had been engaged in six specifically defined federally protected activities, such as voting.

H.R. 1592 also creates a grant program for the federal government to assist state and local law enforcement agencies in investigating and prosecuting hate crimes. State and local law enforcement prosecute the overwhelming majority of hate crimes. However, investigating and prosecuting these acts takes more time and resources than many local and state agencies may possess. Thus, H.R. 1592 authorizes the federal government to provide tools and resources that are needed by local law enforcement.

This legislation is supported by the National Sheriffs Association, National District Attorneys Association, International Association of Chiefs of Police, International Brotherhood of Police Officers, National Coalition of Public Safety Officers, Anti-Defamation League, American Jewish Committee, Consortium of Developmental Disabilities Councils, Human Rights Campaign, NAACP, National Victim Center, United States Conference of Mayors, National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, American Association on Mental Retardation, and more than 200 other law enforcement, religious, civil rights, and civic organizations.

By making our Nation's hate crimes statutes more comprehensive, we will take a needed step in favor of tolerance and against prejudice and hate-based crime in all its forms. This legislation sends a strong message that hate-based crime cannot be tolerated and will be vigorously prosecuted.

Ms. KILPATRICK. Mr. Speaker, at the beginning of every Congress, every member of this august body takes an oath to "defend and protect the Constitution of the United States, against all enemies, foreign and domestic." It is an oath that I am proud that the majority of the citizens of the 13th Congressional District of Michigan have honored me with their vote for more than 12 years. One of the most important duties that I have as a Member of the United States House of Representatives is to protect and defend its citizens, which is precisely what H.R. 1592, the Hate Crimes Prevention Act, introduced by my fellow Michigander and Detroit, one of the founders of the Congressional Black Caucus, House Judiciary Chairman JOHN CONYERS, JR. This bill protects all Americans from bias-motivated violence; it provides funds so that local authorities can tackle the tough challenge of hate crimes, and it protects the First Amendment to the Constitution. It does not criminalize speech or thoughts; it does not give some people "special rights," and it is not anti-Christian.

As a child and as a proud Christian, the least common denominator of all of the lessons that I learned from my parents and minister is about God's ethic of love. Along that, I learned from the practices of my parents and my minister my divine responsibility to love our neighbors as ourselves. Indeed, it is out of my love that all of my brothers and sisters, and the activism that Jesus Christ illustrated through loving His enemies, through His compassion for the poor, the down trodden, and those who seek justice, that I became an activist, a state legislator and now a Member of Congress. It is that thirst for justice for all human beings that drives all that I do, guided by unerring and infinite wisdom and faith in God.

Despite the teachings of my parents and that of countless clergy—of all religions—around our Nation, there are some who perpetrate crime with hatred and bigotry in their heart. Who can forget that, during the civil rights era, the murders of the courageous Medgar Evers? Who can forget the killing of civil rights workers James Chaney, Michael Schwerner, and Andrew Goodman for merely registering African Americans to vote? Who can forget the murder of native Detroiters Viola Liuzzo, who was gunned down as she drove civil rights workers to voting booths? All of these crimes, motivated by some bias, were ultimately prosecuted under Federal laws because, at the time, local authorities were either unable or unwilling to prosecute these crimes. These crimes could only be prosecuted because all of these individuals were participating in activities protected by the Federal Government—helping individuals vote or register to vote, for example. Only in limited, specific instances does this law even apply.

I vote in support of H.R. 1592 because H.R. 1592 sends a powerful message that all crime motivated by hatred and bias will not be tolerated in our society. I have voted for this bill at every opportunity when it came before the U.S. Congress. This legislation strengthens Federal law by providing local authorities with

more money to prosecute hate crime and by expanding the jurisdiction to crimes motivated by bias against the victims actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender, or disability.

Unfortunately, opponents of this bill are shamelessly advancing false claims about the bill's impact on religion, particularly the freedom of clergy to preach about their beliefs, and that the bill legalizes certain sexual acts. Both of these claims are patently false. If you are a minister, this bill does not restrict any sermon, homily, speech or lesson unless that minister plans to start urging people to go out and commit violent crimes against others. During floor debate on the bill, Chairman CONYERS reiterated the fact that the bill would not legalize any one of a plethora of sexual acts or activity, most of which are already illegal in most states.

Again this bill in no way, shape or fashion restricts free speech. Indeed, it clearly states, and has been supported by a Republican-dominated, conservative Supreme Court, that it in fact protects the First Amendment. Language is protected under this bill. Actions are criminalized. Preaching against homosexuality, against disabled people, against women—the categories that this bill protects—is allowed as it has always been, under the protections of the First Amendment. Under this bill, it would be criminal to incite violence by willfully causing "bodily injury based on the actual or perceived race, color, religion, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability of the victim or is a violation of the state, local, or tribal hate crime laws."

Since 1991, over 100,000 hate crimes have occurred in our nation. Hate crimes devastate the communities, counties, cities and states in which they occur. These crimes of bigotry and hatred against an identifiable minority—based on race, color, ethnic origin, gender, disability or sexual orientation—not only hurts the individual affected, but demoralizes and dehumanizes whole groups of people. As the civil rights era clearly illustrated, these crimes are committed solely to intimidate and trample upon the human rights of others.

This as the immediate effect of crushing the investment of companies in that locality, of tourists visiting that state, of individuals wanting to relocate to that region. This is measurable in real dollars and cents. The Federal Government cannot stand by to allow these heinous, horrible offenses to be committed. I did not stand for this when I was an activist fighting for human rights in the City of Detroit, Michigan; I will not stand for it as a Member of Congress with an opportunity to make a change and make a difference.

Holocaust survivor and Nobel Peace Prize winner Elie Wiesel once said that "indifference is always the friend of the enemy, for it benefits the aggressor—never his victim, whose pain is magnified when he or she is forgotten. The political prisoner in his cell, the hungry children, the homeless refugees—not to respond to their plight, not to relieve their solitude by offering them a spark of hope is to exile them from human memory. And in denying their humanity, we betray our own. Indifference, then, is not only a sin, it is a punishment."

In the past decade, our country has had men murdered merely because they were gay, disabled, or African American. These were all hard-working, tax-paying, law-abiding American citizens, killed because of these differences. As we move onward through this